

Partners in Prevention

Texas A&M University College Station, TX

As part of a broad-based effort to curb alcohol and drug use on campus, Texas A&M invites new fraternity and sorority members to participate in ARCHES (Advocating Responsible Choices), a group mentoring program for the university's 3,200-member Greek community. "Advisors and student leaders in several fraternities developed the program as a way to ensure student ownership and responsibility in addressing alcohol and drug use in the college environment," says Carolyn Cox, coordinator of First Year Programs. To date, nearly 40 upper-class students participate as mentors in the program.

Organized by the Office of Alcohol and Drug Education Programs in collaboration with the Office of Greek Life, ARCHES links new members of the Greek community with supportive older members who abstain from drug use and other high-risk behavior. The idea is to partner impressionable newcomers with experienced students who can help them separate the myths from the realities of alcohol and drug use on campus and, in the process, sidestep potential hazards.

"Students entering college have all seen the movie *Animal House* and think that's what college is really like," says Dennis Reardon, senior coordinator for Student Life Alcohol and Drug Education Programs. "Then they talk to successful students and see that, no, it's not that way."

ARCHES aims to do the following:

- Create a supportive network of Greek students who share similar attitudes and beliefs, and who choose to make low-risk decisions about drugs and alcohol.
- Provide new and current members with the opportunity to participate comfortably in a variety of social situations without feeling the pressure to drink or use other drugs.
- Reduce the misperception that all Greek students drink or engage in heavy drinking.
- Create a social norm within the fraternity and sorority system that counters the stereotypical image of men and women involved in Greek organizations.

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A Place of Their Own

**Rutgers University
Camden, Newark,
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For students struggling to recover from alcohol or drug problems, pressure from friends and classmates to drink, smoke, or pop pills can be an enormous obstacle to success. Officials at Rutgers University took this fact to heart and endorsed an innovative treatment strategy called Recovery Housing, which literally brings recovering students together under one roof.

Developed in 1988 by the Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students (ADAPS), Recovery Housing puts recovering students in a building that is physically indistinguishable from other campus housing. This feature, requested by the residents themselves, protects the students' anonymity and allows them to participate in the full breadth of campus activities without fear of stigma. Those living in Recovery Housing are guaranteed

complete privacy and confidentiality, so that others, even students living nearby, do not know they are in recovery.

The living arrangement, which requires residents to be sober and drug free, is entirely verbal, and the absence of Resident Advisors or staff monitors in the building fosters a sense of communal responsibility for sobriety. Students in Recovery Housing have the same access to members of the Residence Life staff as students in other on-campus housing. The only additional support they receive is from the ADAPS staff, located elsewhere on campus.

Residents are united not by special rules but by an honor system and a shared commitment. "This isn't just a place that's drug and alcohol free," says ADAPS Director Lisa Laitman. "This is a supportive environment where everyone you live with is a partner in your recovery."

At first, Recovery Housing was available only to those students in counseling with ADAPS staff. Eventually, it was expanded as more and more entering freshmen heard about the program through their local treatment providers. "We actually have students who came to Rutgers because of this program," says Laitman. Recovery Housing currently accommodates about 21 students.

To be eligible, students must have attended a 12-step program, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and they are expected to continue attending once they move into Recovery Housing. Although there has been no formal evaluation to determine the program's success, Laitman says the response from former participants gives her reason to believe it is working.

"Every time they celebrate any kind of anniversary," she says, "they write to thank me for saving their lives."

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A Dose of Reality

Eastern Michigan University Ypsilanti, MI

After years of conducting student surveys and monitoring trends in the campus environment, officials at Eastern Michigan University determined they needed greater consistency between school alcohol and drug policies and enforcement of those policies. Measures that only punish, the university realized, do not offer educational alternatives that support student growth and development. So about ten years ago, the school launched the Checkpoint Program, a strategy that complements enforcement efforts and seeks to change the attitudes and behavior of students who violate the school's policy on alcohol and drugs.

"The program is not preachy, not prohibitionist," says Ellen Gold, Director of University Health Services. "It allows people to look introspectively at their behavior and think about the choices they've made, then decide for themselves if there's a reason to change."

The Checkpoint Program is an interactive, facilitated workshop for groups of six or eight first-time violators. In three 2-hour sessions, participants are guided through discussions on topics such as impaired driving, gender-specific drug and alcohol use, and the effects of alcohol on the body, the mind, and academic achievement. In one session, participants use their imaginations to recreate the events of a campus party, describing the revelers' behavior as the evening progresses and discussing what's happening to their brains in the flood of alcohol and drugs.

Student first-time violators are required to attend the Checkpoint Program, which is also available to the non-college community for youth ages 17 to 25 who have been cited for drug or alcohol offenses. The fees for the program are \$75 for an on-campus referral and \$100 for a court referral.

Each year, some 200 people (most of them freshmen) take part in the program. Followup interviews help determine its long-range effectiveness. So far, says Gold, it seems to be making a positive impact. "We've had people who've completed the program come back and volunteer to work for us," she says. "That tells us something has reached them."

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ONE SCHOOL'S APPROACH

An Infusion of Drug Awareness

**University of California,
Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA**

In an effort to engage students in prevention activities, UCSB uses the broad-brush method of curriculum infusion to spread the word about the risks of drug use. Participating faculty in a variety of disciplines "infuse" their regular courses with prevention information. As a result, hundreds of students each year get valuable messages from people they respect about the risks of drugs and alcohol.

"When a faculty member they look up to is willing to talk to them about drugs, students will listen," says Sabina White, Director of Student Health.

Faculty participate in several ways. Some receive mini-grants from the Division of Student Affairs to cover the costs of incor-

porating material about drug use into their courses. Professors are given total creative freedom, so the drug-and-alcohol messages are often quite imaginative and go beyond the familiar warnings. In the course Popular Music in America, for example, students learn about the impact of drugs and alcohol on music and musicians. Students in a marine science course observe the effects of alcohol on living cells.

Working with faculty in the Film and Art Departments, students compete for funding to produce film and photography projects with prevention messages pertaining to alcohol and other drugs. Funds earmarked for curriculum infusion are also used to hire faculty in the Department of Dramatic Art to oversee student productions that focus on drug use and other health issues.

In a class on Persuasion Theory, students develop social marketing products—brochures, radio spots, videos, and the like—with messages aimed at persuading their friends and classmates to avoid drugs and excessive drinking. Participating students gain insight into beliefs regarding alcohol and drugs, and they also learn about actual levels of use on campus.

One goal of this strategy, besides changing attitudes among the intended audience, is to promote self-discovery and greater awareness among the students who create the messages. “The value of these so-called ‘stealth education’ classes,” says White, “is that while students learn about communications, they’re also gaining valuable knowledge about things that can affect their health.”

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